



## Scapular Plane Swimming<sup>SM</sup>

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Kipp Dye, MSPT who is the owner of OrthoSportsMED Physical Therapy ([www.osmed.net](http://www.osmed.net)), located in Needham, MA, USA has been working in collaboration with well known swimming specialist Milt Nelms to create a new “shoulder-safe” swimming technique called **Scapular Plane Swimming<sup>SM</sup>**.

**Scapular Plane Swimming<sup>SM</sup>** is an approach to swimming that decreases the possibility of swimmers developing shoulder problems from swimming with traditional swimming mechanics.

The introduction of **Scapular Plan Swimming<sup>SM</sup>** into the routines of patients with shoulder trauma or injury, combined with therapeutic strategies, can help to accelerate recovery. Swimming outside the scapular plane places undue stress on the muscles and tendons of the rotator cuff.

Shoulder pain is primarily developed from impingement of the subacromial structures of the shoulder(s) demonstrated clinically as bursitis, tendonitis, and various degrees of rotator cuff tears due to fraying of the tendonous tissues. This happens when the rotator cuff is placed in nonlinear positions or outside the scapular plane anatomically.

Impingement occurs from improper biomechanical based traditionally coached and taught swimming techniques and stroke drills. These traditional swimming techniques place the glenohumoral joint in a position that compromises the rotator cuff by placing the cuff tendons under tremendous compressive forces creating an ischemic environment (a wringing of blood from the tissues of the cuff).

“Shoulder-safe” swimming should be performed in the scapular plane with avoidance of over-head motion of the glenohumoral joint beyond approximately 150 degrees. This is possible if the swimmer has excellent (appropriate) linear body rotation and stability, allowing the arms to essentially swing into the pulling position without over reaching for optimal muscle activation and avoidance of over pushing upon exit from the water to avoid over distension of the cuff.

In order to promote shoulder health the swimming community should review the teaching principles of traditional swimming techniques for one simple reason: too many swimmers have been injured from compromising the shoulders with injury-producing biomechanics.

For more information regarding **Scapular Plane Swimming<sup>SM</sup>** please contact us at [ortho@osmed.net](mailto:ortho@osmed.net) or call 781-444-1290.